

DTSC PUBLIC PARTICIPATION WORKING GLOSSARY

NOTE: This is a compilation of definitions gathered from various public participation documents and has not been subjected to rigorous technical review.

Acceptable intake (for subchronic and chronic exposure)

Numbers which describe how toxic a chemical is. The numbers are derived from animal studies on the relationship between dose and non-cancer effects. There are two types of acceptable exposure values: one for relatively short-term and one for longer-term exposure.

Acetone

A widely used, highly volatile solvent. It is readily absorbed by breathing, ingestion or contact with the skin. Workers who have breathed in acetone have reported upper-respiratory and respiratory problems.

Acid neutralization sump

A basin in which wastewater containing acids is neutralized prior to being discharged to a sewer.

Acid recovery column

An air pollution control device which captures and collects acid from emission gases.

Acids

A class of compounds having a low pH, and corrosive in nature. Items such as vinegar and lemon juice are acidic. By contrast, drinking water is near neutral and has a medium pH; and laundry detergent is basic and has a low pH.

Action level

A guideline established by the environmental protection agencies that identifies the concentration of a substance in a particular media (water, soil, etc.) that may present a health risk when exceeded. The action level is also referred to as applied action level (AAL). If contamination is found in concentrations above the action level, measures must be taken to decrease the concentrations of contamination.

Activated sludge

A term used to describe air-breathing microorganisms that break down organic contaminants (i.e., benzene) in liquid waste streams to simpler substances such as water and carbon dioxide.

Activity

The number of particles or photons that are ejected from a radioactive substance per unit of time.

Acute hazards

Hazards associated with short-term exposure to large amounts of toxic substances.

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Adhesives

Often referred to as cements, glues or pastes. Adhesives are substances capable of holding materials together.

Adverse health effect

Adverse health effects that may result from exposure to toxics range from relatively mild temporary conditions such as minor eye or throat irritation, shortness of breath or headaches to permanent and serious conditions such as cancer, birth defects or damage to organs.

Advisory level

The level above which an environmental protection agency suggests it is potentially harmful to be exposed to a contaminant.

Aeration

A process that promotes breakdown of contaminants in soil or water by exposing them to air.

Air stripping tower

Air stripping removes volatile organic chemicals (such as solvents) from the water causing them to evaporate. Polluted water is sprayed downward through a tower filled with packing materials while air is blown upwards. The contaminants evaporate leaving significantly-reduced pollutant levels in the water.

Air stripping

A process whereby volatile organic chemicals (such as solvents) are removed from contaminated material by forcing a stream of air through it in a pressurized vessel. The contaminants are evaporated into the air stream. The air may be further treated before it is released into the atmosphere.

Alkaline

Alkaline means that a substance is basic, or has a high pH value. Laundry soap is basic and has a high pH. By contrast, lemon juice is acidic and has a low pH; drinking water is near neutral, and has a medium pH;

Alluvial

An area of sand, clay or other similar material that has been gradually deposited by moving water, such as along a river bed or shore of a lake.

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Alpha particle

A positively-charged particle that is emitted from radioactive atoms. Alpha particles can travel less than one inch in the air. A thin sheet of paper will stop the particle. The particle is only a hazard if ingested.

Ambient air

The surrounding atmosphere.

Applicable or Relevant and Appropriate Requirements (ARARs)

Federal or state laws, regulations, standards, criteria or requirements which would apply to the cleanup of hazardous substances at a particular site.

Aqueous

Water-based liquid.

Aquifer

A water-bearing soil layer, under the surface of the earth. This zone is often the source of drinking or irrigation water.

Arsenic

A crystalline gray highly poisonous metal, most commonly brittle. It is used as an alloy for metals, especially lead and copper, and is used in insect-killing chemicals and weed killers. In its inorganic form, it is listed as a cancer-causing chemical under Proposition 65.

Artesian (well)

A well made by drilling into the earth until water is reached which, from internal pressure, flows up like a fountain.

Asbestos

A general name that applies to a family of naturally occurring fibrous silicate minerals. Asbestos fibers were used mainly for insulation and as a fire retardant material in construction, industry, in ship building and as brake-liners in automobiles. Breathing-in asbestos fibers has been shown to result in lung disease (asbestosis) and in lung cancer (mesothelioma). The risk of developing mesothelioma is significantly enhanced in smokers. Recent evidence also suggests that ingestion of asbestos in drinking water may result in cancer of the pancreas and gastrointestinal tract.

Backfill

To refill an excavated area with uncontaminated soils; or, the material itself that is used to refill an

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excavated area.

Background concentration

Represents the average amount of toxic chemicals in the air, water or soil to which people are routinely exposed. More than half of the background concentration of toxic air contaminations in metropolitan areas comes from automobiles, trucks and other vehicles. The rest comes from industry and business, agricultural, and from the use of paints, solvents and chemicals in the home.

Background levels

Levels of toxic substances that occur in a certain area, excluding a known source of contamination.

Bases

Substances characterized by high pH (greater than 7.0), which tend to be corrosive in chemical reactions. Laundry detergent is basic. By contrast, drinking water is neutral and has a medium pH; lemon juice is acidic and has a low pH.

Bay Area Quality Management District (BAAQMD)

The agency having State regulatory authority over stationary air emissions in the Bay Area.

Benzene

A petroleum derivative and a widely used solvent in the chemical industry. Uses of benzene include synthesis of rubber, nylon, polystyrene, pesticides and unleaded gasoline. Benzene is a highly volatile chemical and is readily absorbed by breathing, ingestion or contact with the skin. Short-term exposures to high concentrations of benzene may result in death following depression of the central nervous system or fatal disturbances of heart rhythm. Long-term, low-level exposures to benzene can result in blood disorders such as aplastic anemia and leukemia. Benzene is listed as a cancer-causing chemical under Proposition 65.

Berm

A ledge, wall or a mound of earth used to prevent the migration of contaminants.

Bioaccumulate

The process by which some contaminants or toxic chemicals gradually collect and increase in concentration in living tissue, such as in plants, fish, or people as they breathe contaminated air, drink contaminated water, or eat contaminated food.

Bioremediation

A process that uses microorganisms to change toxic compounds into non-toxic compounds.

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Biosolids

A waste generated from the treatment of wastewater from petroleum refining and the manufacture of industrial chemicals.

Biota

The animal and plant life of a particular region, considered as a total ecological entity.

Biotransformation

Transformation of a chemical to other chemicals, aided by populations of microorganisms in the soil.

Borings

Usually, a vertical hole drilled into the ground from which soil samples can be collected and analyzed to determine the presence of chemicals and the physical characteristics of the soil.

Borrow pit

An excavated area where soil, sand or gravel has been dug up for use elsewhere.

Cadmium

A metal, produced commercially as a by-product of zinc smelting. Major industrial uses for cadmium include electroplating, plastics, pigments, alloys and batteries. Cadmium is present in very small amounts in most foods and in cigarette smoke. Cadmium tends to accumulate in the body over time. Long-term ingestion to cadmium is associated with heart and kidney diseases, bone disease (osteoporosis and osteomalacia), decreased fertility, and impaired immune function. Long-term breathing-in of cadmium fumes or dust is associated with the development of emphysema, bronchitis and an increased risk of lung cancer.

California Environmental Quality Act CEQA)

A law mandating environmental impact review of governmental actions in California. The Act applies generally to all activities undertaken by state and local agencies, and to private activities financed, regulated, or approved by state and local agencies.

Cancer risk

A number, generally expressed in exponential form (i.e., 1×10^{-6} , which means one in one million), which describes the increased possibility of an individual developing cancer from exposure to toxics. Calculations producing cancer risk numbers are complex and typically include a number of conservative, margins-of-safety assumptions that tend to cause the final estimated risk number to be higher.

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Cap

A layer of material, such as clay or a synthetic material, used to prevent rainwater from penetrating and spreading contaminated materials. The surface of the cap is generally mounded or sloped so water will drain off.

Carbamate

A group of insect-killing chemicals that contain the chemical carbamic acid. They are primarily used in corn, alfalfa, tobacco, cotton, soy, fruits and ornamental plants. Carbamates are toxic.

Carbon adsorption

A treatment system in which contaminants are removed from groundwater and surface water by forcing water through tanks containing activated carbon, a specially-treated material that attracts and holds, or retains, contaminants.

Carbon monoxide

A very poisonous gas formed when carbon burns incompletely, as in the exhaust of automobile engines.

Carbon tetrachloride (CCl₄)

A colorless, nonflammable toxic liquid that has an odor resembling that of chloroform and was widely used as a solvent in dry-cleaning. It is listed as a cancer-causing chemical under Proposition 65.

Catalyst

A substance that causes or accelerates chemical change by addition of a substance that is not permanently affected by the reaction (e.g., platinum in an automobile catalytic converter changes carbon monoxide to an inert gas).

Catalytic Cracker Unit

Breaks petroleum molecules apart into separate products (such as gasoline and propane) during the petroleum refining process. The unit "cracks" petroleum molecules into its constituents.

Caustic scrubber

An air pollution control device in which acid gases are neutralized.

Chlorinated herbicides

A group of plant-killing chemicals which contain chlorine, used mainly for weed control.

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Chlorobenzene

A volatile organic compound that is often used as a solvent and in the production of other chemicals. It is a colorless liquid with an almond-like odor. It is toxic.

Chloroform

Chloroform was once commonly used as a general anesthetic and as a flavoring agent in toothpastes, mouth wastes and cough syrups.

Chloropyridines

Hydrocarbons containing chlorine, commonly used in the production of plastics.

Chromated copper arsenate

An insect and plant killing chemical formed from salts of three toxic metals: copper, chromium and arsenic. This salt is used extensively as a wood preservative in pressure-treating operations. It is highly toxic and dissolves in water, making it a relatively mobile contaminant in the environment.

Chromium

A hard, brittle, semi-gray heavy metal used in tanning, paint formulation, plating metal and plastic substances against corrosion. Known to be toxic at certain levels. In its hexavalent (verses trivalent) form, chromium is listed as a cancer-causing agent under Proposition 65.

Chronic exposure

Repeated contact with a chemical over a period of time, often involving small amounts of toxic substance.

Class I landfill

A landfill permitted to accept substances classified as hazardous wastes.

Cleanup process

A comprehensive program for the clean-up (remediation) of a contaminated site. It involves investigation, analysis, development of a cleanup plan and implementation of that plan.

Combustion gases

Gases composed primarily of nitrogen, carbon dioxide, oxygen and water, plus lesser quantities of nitrogen oxides and other gases that depend on the composition of what is being burned.

Combustible vapor mixture

When air contains enough suspended droplets of an ignitable liquid and enough oxygen that it will

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burn rapidly (apparently explode) when subjected to spark, flame or high heat.

Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA)

Also known as Superfund, this Federal law authorizes the government to respond directly to releases of hazardous substances that may endanger public health or the environment. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is responsible for managing Superfund. In 1986, the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA), amended and reauthorized CERCLA for five years at a total funding level of \$8.5 billion. SARA also strengthened State involvement in the cleanup process, and encouraged the use of treatment technologies and permanent solutions.

Consent decree

A legal document, approved and issued by a judge, formalizing an agreement between DTSC and the parties potentially responsible for site contamination. The decree describes: cleanup actions that the potentially responsible parties are required to perform; and the costs incurred by the government that the parties will reimburse; and the roles, responsibilities and enforcement options that the government may exercise in the event of non-compliance by potentially responsible parties. If a settlement between DTSC and a potentially responsible party includes cleanup actions, it must be in the form of a consent decree. A consent decree is subject to a public comment period.

Containment

The process of enclosing or containing hazardous substances in a structure to prevent the migration of contaminants into the environment.

Copper

Distinctive red-colored metal used for electric wiring, plumbing, heating and roof and building construction, and in automobile brake linings. Known to be toxic at certain levels and potentially explosive in some forms.

Corrosive

The ability to cause destruction of living tissue or steel surfaces by chemical action (for example: battery acid).

Creosotes

Chemicals used in wood preserving operations. The chemicals are produced by distilling tar, including polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons and polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs and PNAs) creosotes may cause skin ulcerations. High level, short-term exposures to creosotes may cause skin ulcerations. Creosotes are listed as cancer-causing agents under Proposition 65.

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Criteria pollutants

Pollutants for which there are considered to be safe levels of exposure, and for which standards have been set. Current criteria pollutants are: sulfur oxides, particulate matter, carbon monoxide, nitric oxides, ozone and lead.

Cumulative impact

The term cumulative impact is used in two ways: to describe the impact of exposure to more than one compound; and to describe the impact of exposure to emissions from more than one facility.

Cyanide

A highly toxic chemical often used to treat metal surfaces or extract precious metal from ore.

DDT

A persistent chemical formerly widely used as an insect killer. The U.S. EPA banned its use due, in part to its toxic effect on wildlife. It may also have toxic effects on humans with prolonged exposure.

Degrease

To remove grease from machinery, tools, etc., usually using solvents.

Deionized water

Water which has been specifically treated to remove all minerals.

de minimis risk

A level of risk that the scientific and regulatory community asserts is too insignificant to regulate.

Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC)

A department within the California Environmental Protection Agency charged with the responsibility for overseeing the investigation and clean-up of hazardous waste sites. DTSC was formerly the California Department of Health Services, Toxic Substances Control.

Destruction and removal efficiency (DRE)

A percentage that represents the number of molecules of compound removed or destroyed in an incinerator relative to the number of molecules that entered the incinerator system. A DRE of 99.99 percent means that 9,999 molecules of a compound are destroyed for every 10,000 molecules that enter the system.

Dewater

To remove water from wastes, soils or chemicals.

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Diazinon

As insect-killing chemical containing phosphates. In 1986, U.S. EPA banned its use in open areas because it posed a danger to animals. It is still used in agriculture have lawn and commerical uses.

Dibromochloropropane (DBCP)

An amber-colored liquid, used in a agriculture to kill worms in the soil. Inhalation of high concentrations of DBCP causes nausea and irritation of the respiratory tract. Chronic exposure results in sterility in males. DBCP is listed as a cancer-causing agent under Proposition 65.

Dichlorobenzene (DCB)

A volatile organic compound that is often used as a deodorizer, and as a moth, mold and mildew killer. It is a white solid with a strong odor of mothballs. It is toxic and is listed as a cancer-causing agent under Proposition 65.

Dichloroethane

A colorless liquid, which evaporates readily in certain situations. It is used as a solvent and as a gasoline additive. It can cause nervous system damages.

Dieldrin

Dieldrin is an insect-killing chemical that is readily absorbed through the skin or following ingestion. Dieldrin is classified as a probable human carcinogen.

Dioxin

A group of generally toxic organic compounds that may be formed as a result of incomplete combustion (as may occur in incineration of compounds containing chlorine). RCRA regulations require a higher destruction and removal efficiency (DRE) for dioxins and related furans (99.9999 percent) than the DRE required for most other organic compounds (99.99 percent) if it is part of the waste to be burned. Dioxins are highly toxic and are rapidly absorbed from the skin and gastrointestinal tract.

Dissolved air floatation (DAF) float

A waste generated from the treatment of waste water from petroluem refining and the manufacture of industrial chemicals. It is listed as a hazardous waste by the U.S. EPA.

Downgradient

The direction in which groundwater flows.

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Effluent

Wastewater, treated or untreated, that flows out of a treatment plant, sewer or industrial outfall. Generally refers to wastes discharged into surface waters.

Electrostatic precipitator

An air pollution control device that uses electrical charges to remove particular matter from emission gases.

Emulsifiers

Substances that help in mixing materials that don't normally mix; e.g., oil and water.

Endosulfan

An insect-killing chemical, used on vegetable crops, fruits and nuts. It is toxic.

Estuary (estuarine)

Areas where fresh water from rivers and salt water from nearshore ocean waters are mixed. These areas may include bays, mouths of rivers, salt marshes and lagoons. These water ecosystems shelter and feed marine life, birds and wildlife.

Ethylene glycol

Used in the manufacture of a wide variety of industrial compounds and in certain cosmetics. It is used most commonly as an automobile antifreeze. It is toxic.

Exposure pathways

Existing or hypothetical routes by which chemicals in soil, groundwater or other media can come in to contact with humans, animals or plants.

Extraction wells

Wells that are used primarily to remove groundwater from the ground. Water level measurements and water samples can also be collected from extraction wells.

Fallout

The radioactive dust particles that settle to earth after the denotation of a nuclear device.

Filter cake

A by-product of a waste treatment process that consists of a mixture of sediments and fluid wastes.

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Flammables

A class of compounds which burn easily. Flammability is one criteria used to classify a waste as hazardous.

Fly ash

Non-combustible residue that results from burning of gases. It can include nitrogen oxides, carbon oxides, water vapor, sulfur oxides, as well as many other chemical pollutants.

Footprint

The outline of an area within which hazardous substances are suspected or known to exist.

Formaldehyde

Used in the construction and building industries, largely in wood products and in foam insulation. It is also used in some deodorizing preparations and in fumigants. Formaldehyde is listed as a cancer-causing agent under Proposition 65.

French drain system

A crushed rock drain system, constructed of perforated pipes, which is used to drain and disperse wastewater.

Fugitive emissions

Releases of pollutants to the atmosphere that occur when vapors are vented from containers or tanks where hazardous wastes are stored. Fugitive emissions can also be caused by spills occurring during the unloading of hazardous wastes from vehicles, leaks from pipes and valves, and through equipment operation.

Gamma particle

A chargeless, massless photon that is emitted from certain radioactive atoms. Similar to X-rays, gamma particles travel several yards in the air.

Geophysical logging

A general term that encompasses all techniques for determining whether a subsurface geological formation may be sufficiently porous or permeable to serve as an aquifer. These techniques typically involve lowering a sensing device into a borehole to measure properties of the subsurface formation.

Granular activated carbon (GAC)

A form of crushed and hardened charcoal. GAC has a strong potential to attract and absorb volatile

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organic compounds from extracted groundwater.

Groundwater

Water beneath the earth's surface that flows through soil and rock openings, and often serves as a primary source of drinking water.

Half life

The amount of time that is required for a radioactive substance to lose one-half its activity. Each radioactive substance has a unique half-life.

Halogens

Reactive chemicals, such as chlorine and bromine which have many industrial uses. They are rarely found by themselves. Many chemicals--such as polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), some volatile compounds (VOCs) and dioxin are reactive because of the presence of halogens.

Hazardous waste

Waste substances which can pose a substantial or potential hazard to human health or the environment when improperly managed. Hazardous waste possesses at least one of these four characteristics (or appears on special U.S. EPA lists): ignitability, corrosivity, reactivity or toxicity.

Health risk/endangerment assessment

A study prepared to assess health and environmental risks due to potential exposure to hazardous substances.

Health-based remediation targets

Levels to which hazardous substances on the site will be cleaned up. These target levels are health-based, meaning that exposure to the hazardous substances at or below the target is not expected to present a significant health risk. "Significant" health risk, in this case, is a one-in-a-million or greater increase in the probability of an individual developing cancer. The target levels are also set so that other, non-cancer health effects are unlikely to occur. DTSC uses the Public Health and Environmental Evaluation as a basis for setting these target levels.

Heavy metals

A group of elements (such as chromium, lead, copper and zinc) that can be toxic at relatively low concentrations.

Heptachlor epoxide

A chemical created as an insect-killer, widely used on strawberry plants. Heptachlor breaks down

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(biodegrades) in the environment. Heptachlor belongs to the group of insect-killing chemicals known as organochlorides.

Horizontal wells

Extraction and monitoring wells are typically drilled vertically. A horizontal well has the advantage of providing a large area of groundwater capture for a lower overall cost.

Hot spot criteria

Cleanup levels for small areas on the site that have particularly high concentrations of hazardous substances.

Hydrochloric acid

Clear, colorless, highly acidic solution that is toxic at certain levels and is often used in metal cleaning and petroleum production. Many hazardous wastes contain chlorine which, when burned, tends to create hydrochloric acid. Any acid gas emissions into the atmosphere contribute to the formation of acid rain. Regulations require that air pollution control equipment remove either 99% of the hydrochloric acid, or that the emissions contain less than four pounds per hour.

Hydrogen chloride (HCl)

A colorless, poisonous, acid gas that fumes in moist air yields hydrochloric acid when dissolved in water controlled by air pollution devices known as "scrubbers."

Hydrogeology

The geology of groundwater, with particular emphasis on the chemistry and movement of water.

Ignitable

Capable of being set afire, or bursting into flame spontaneously or by interaction with another substance or material (for example: gasoline).

Impoundment

A body of water or sludge confined by a dam, dike, floodgate or other barrier.

In-situ soil aeration

Applying a vacuum to vapor extraction wells to draw air through the soil pores so that chemicals in the soil are brought to the surface where they can be treated.

Incompatible wastes

Wastes which, when mixed together, create toxic gases or intense heat.

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Indicator chemicals

Chemicals selected from the group of chemicals found at the site to be used for the public health evaluation. Indicator chemicals are selected on the basis of toxicity, mobility and persistence and are thought to be the chemicals of the greatest potential risk.

Interim remedial measures (IRMs)

Cleanup actions taken to initiate site cleanup while long-term solutions are developed.

Interim remedial actions (IRAs)

Cleanup actions taken to protect public health and the environment while long-term solutions are being developed.

Irritant

A chemical that can cause inflammation at the site of contact.

Lagging

A material for thermal and sound insulation.

Leachate

Typically, water that has come in contact with hazardous wastes.

Lead

A heavy metal of a dull grayish color that is present in small amounts everywhere in the human environment. Lead can get into the body from drinking contaminated water, eating vegetables grown in contaminated soil, or breathing dust when children play or adults work in lead-contaminated areas. Lead can cause damage to the nervous system or blood cells if present in the body. Children are at highest risk from exposure to lead contamination because their bodies are still developing. Lead is listed as a reproductive toxic substance for women and men under Proposition 15.

Lead agency

A public agency which has the principle responsibility for ordering and overseeing site investigation and cleanup. Usually the agency with the broadest regulatory authority.

Lindane

Lindane (gamma benzene hexachloride) is insect-killing chemical. It is highly toxic to humans.

Magnesia

Magnesia is a name for magnesium oxide, used medicinally ("Milk of Magnesia") and in agricultural

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soil supplements.

Magnesium

This strong, flexible metal and its derivatives are used in lightweight alloys as an electrical conductive material, in incendiary devices such as flares, in antacids and in cathartics. Magnesium is a nutritionally essential trace metal. At higher levels, it is toxic.

Malathion

Malathion is an insect-killer. It is toxic and affects the nervous system.

Marion chronic criteria

Water quality criteria established by the U.S. EPA which concentrations of constituents in water which, if not exceeded, are protective of aquatic ecosystems.

Maximum contaminant level (MCL)

A contaminant level for drinking water, established by the California Department of Health Services, Division of Drinking Water and Environmental Management, or by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. These levels are legally-enforceable standards which are based on health risk (primary standards) or non-health concerns such as odor or taste (secondary standards).

Mercury

Also known as "quicksilver," this metal is used to kill fungi, in the paper pulp and chemical industries, and in the manufacture of thermometers. Mercury exists in three biologically important forms, elemental, inorganic and organic. Although organic mercury compounds are the most toxic form of mercury, environmental transformations between these three forms do occur. It is highly toxic and affects the nervous system, kidneys and other organs.

Methane

An odorless, colorless, flammable gas that is the major constituent of natural gas. It can be formed from rotting organic matter (i.e., trash in a landfill), and seep up through soils or migrate through underground piping to the surface. If it collects in a closed space and reaches certain concentrations, a spark could cause an explosion.

Methyl ethyl ketone (MEK)

An organic solvent which mixes easily with water. MEK is used industrially as a solvent, in surface coating, manufacture of smokeless powder and in the production of synthetic resins.

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Methylene chloride

A colorless, liquid which evaporates easily. It has been used as a metal cleaner, paint thinner, in wood stains, spot removers, fabric protectors, shoe polish and aerosol propellants. Methylene chloride causes skin and eye irritation. Overexposure to methylene chloride may cause nausea, dizziness, and anesthetic effects.

Micrograms per gram ($\mu\text{g/g}$)

A measurable unit of concentration for a solid expressed in terms of micrograms per gram. A mercury level of $1.0 \mu\text{g/g}$ means that one microgram (one millionth of a gram) of mercury was detected in one gram of soil. Also equals one part per million.

Milligram per cubic meter (mg/m^3)

A measurable unit of concentration for air contaminants expressed in terms of milligrams per cubic meter. A mercury vapor level of 1.0 mg/m^3 means that one-thousandth of a gram of mercury vapor was detected in each cubic meter of sampled air.

Milligram per kilogram (mg/kg)

A measurable unit of concentration for a solid expressed in terms of milligrams per kilogram. A mercury level of 1.0 mg/kg in fish means that one one thousandth of a gram of mercury was found in each kilogram of sampled fish. (1,000 grams or approximately 2.2 pounds). Also equals one part per million.

Migration

The movement of chemical contaminants through soils or groundwater.

Mitigation

Actions taken to improve site conditions by limiting, reducing or controlling toxicity and contamination sources.

Monitoring wells

Specially-constructed wells used exclusively for testing water quality.

National Priorities List (NPL)

U.S. EPA's list of the top priority hazardous waste sites in the country that are subject to the Superfund program.

National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES)

A system that requires a permit for the discharge of waste water to surface waters of the state.

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NPDES permits are obtained from the Regional Water Quality Control Board.

Negative Declaration

A California Environmental Quality Act document issued by the lead regulatory agency when the initial environmental study reveals no substantial evidence that the proposed project will have a significant effect on the environment, or when any significant effects would be avoided or mitigated by revisions agreed to by the applicant.

Neutrals

Organic compounds that have a relatively neutral pH (are neither acid nor base), complex structure and, due to their carbon bases, are easily absorbed into the environment. Naphthalene, pyrene, and trichlorobenzene are examples of neutrals.

Nickel

A metal used in alloys to provide corrosion and heat resistance for products in the iron, steel and aerospace industries. Nickel is used as a catalyst in the chemical industry. It is toxic and, in some forms, is listed as a cancer-causing agent under Proposition 65.

Nitrate

Formed when ammonia is degraded by microorganisms in soil or groundwater. This compound is usually associated with fertilizers.

Nitroaromatics

Common components of explosive materials, which will explode if activated by very high temperatures or pressures; 2,4,6-trinitrotoluene (TNT) is a nitroaromatic.

Non-attainment pollutants

Air pollutants (sulfur or nitric oxides, particulate matter, carbon monoxide, ozone and lead) that exceed set standards in a certain air basin.

Operation Plan

A document that a hazardous waste facility submits to DTSC. The operations plan gives details about how the facility is built, the hazardous wastes which are managed and how the wastes are managed. It includes a plan to be used in case of emergency and a detailed description of the hazardous waste operations. DTSC used the operations plan as a guide when writing permits in order to ensure the protection of human health and the environment.

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Organochlorides

A group of organic (containing carbon) insect-killing chemicals that also contain chlorine. These chemicals tend not to break down easily in the environment. DDT, Toxaphene, and Endosulfan are all organochlorides.

Organophosphate

A group of organic (containing carbon) insect-killing chemicals that also contain phosphorus. Parathion and Malathion are organophosphates.

Overpacking

Process used for isolating waste by jacketing or encapsulating waste to prevent further spread or leakage of contaminating materials. Leaking drums may be contained within oversized barrels as an interim measure prior to removal and final disposal.

Oxidizers

Any compound that spontaneously gives off oxygen, either at room temperature or under slight heating. This may cause a violent reaction similar to an explosion.

Ozone and carbon absorption system

Ozone changes volatile organic compounds (VOCs) into chemicals which pose no potential threat to human health, by breaking them down to form carbon dioxide and water. Carbon absorption removes VOCs from water by physically depositing the chemicals on the carbon particles. Used carbon is then disposed of in an appropriate landfill or by high-temperature incineration.

Parathion and Methylparathion

Parathion and Methylparathion are insect-killing chemicals. They are toxic.

Particulate

Pieces of solid matter in the emission gases of an incinerator. Particles below 10 microns (10 one-millionths of a meter) in diameter are considered potential health risks because, when inhaled, they are taken deep into the lungs. The regulations require that the system emit no more than 180 milligrams of total particulates per dry standard cubic meter per minute.

Parts per billion (ppb)

A unit of measure used to describe levels or concentrations of contamination. For example, one drop of liquid in 500 barrels of liquid would create a concentration of approximately 2 ppb. One ppb equals 0.00001 percent.

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Pentachlorophenol (PCP)

A petroleum-based chemical that is used as a wood preservative because it kills fungus and termites. It is common component of creosotes.

Perched groundwater

Water which accumulates beneath the earth's surface but above the main water bearing zone (or aquifer). Typically, perched groundwater occurs when a limited zone (or lens) of harder, less permeable soil is "perched" in otherwise porous soils. Rainwater moving downward through the soil stops at the lens, flows along the lens, then seeps downward toward the aquifer.

Perchloroethylene (PCE)

A volatile organic compound that is used primarily as a dry-cleaning agent. It is often referred to as "perc." It is toxic and listed as a cancer-causing chemical under Proposition 65.

Percolation

The downward flow or filtering of water or other liquids through subsurface rock or soil layers, usually continuing downward groundwater.

Pesticide

A general term for insecticides, herbicides and fungicides. Insecticides are any substance or mixture of substances intended for preventing, destroying, repelling or mitigating any pest. Herbicides are any substance or mixture of substances intended for use as a plant regulator, defoliant, or desiccant. Fungicides are used to control plant diseases. pesticides can accumulate in the food chain and contaminate the environment.

Petrex Method

A method for collecting vapor samples from surface soil.

Petrochemicals

Chemical substances produced from petroleum in refinery operations and as fuel oil residues. These include fluranthene, chrysene, mineral spirits and refined oils. Petrochemicals are the bases from which volatile organic compounds (VOCs), plastics, many pesticides are made. These chemical substances are often toxic to humans and the environment.

Phenols

Organic compounds that are used in plastics manufacturing and are by-products of petroleum refining, tanning, textile, dye and resin manufacturing. Phenols are highly toxic.

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Piezometers

Small-diameter wells used to measure groundwater levels.

Pilot study

A study conducted on a possible cleanup alternative during the Feasibility Study pertaining to a specific site. It is used to gather data necessary for the final selection of the cleanup method.

Plume

A body of contaminated groundwater flowing from a specific source. The movement of the groundwater is influenced by such factors as local groundwater flow patterns, the character of the aquifer in which groundwater is contained, and the density of contaminants.

Polychlorinated biphenyl (PCBs)

A group of toxic chemicals used for a variety of purposes including electrical applications, carbonless copy paper, adhesives, hydraulic fluids, microscope emersion oils and caulking compounds. PCBs do not breakdown easily and are listed as cancer causing agents under Proposition 65.

Polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs or PNAs)

Chemical compounds formed as a result of incomplete combustion. PAHs are found in a wide variety of common materials such as charcoal, diesel exhaust, asphalt, roofing materials, fireplace soot and grilled meats. Certain of these compounds are suspected to cause cancer. They tend not to move in the environment because they adhere to the soil and do not dissolve easily in water.

Polyvinyl chloride (PVC)

A plastic made from the gaseous substance vinyl chloride. PVC is used to make pipes, records, raincoats and floor tiles. Health risks from high concentrations of vinyl chloride include liver cancer and lung cancer, as well as cancer of the lymphatic and nervous systems.

Potentially Responsible Party (PRP)

An individual, company or government body identified as potentially liable for a release of hazardous substances to the environment. By federal law, such parties may include generators, transporters, storers and disposers of hazardous waste, as well as present and past site owners and operators.

Principle organic hazardous constituents (POHCs)

Specific hazardous compounds monitored during an incinerator, boiler or industrial furnace trial burn. POHCs are selected based on their high concentration in the waste feed and their difficulty to burn relative to other organic compounds contained in the waste, as specified in EPA guidance. For each waste feed, one or more POHCs may be designed.

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Proprietary (trade secret)

A substance manufactured and sold by the owner of the patent trademark, etc. The Department will classify information as proprietary provided that the owner demonstrates the following: the business has asserted a business confidentiality claim; the business has shown it has taken reasonable measures to protect the confidentiality of the information both within the company and to outside entities; the information is not, and has not been reasonably obtainable without the business' consent; no statute specifically requires disclosure of the information; and either the business has shown that disclosure of the information is likely to cause substantial harm to the business' competitive position, or the information is voluntarily submitted and its disclosure would likely impair the government's ability to obtain necessary information in the future.

Public participation plan

A document, approved by DTSC, that is designed to determine a community's informational needs and to provide a program for public involvement during site investigation and cleanup activities.

Public health and environmental evaluation

An assessment of current and future potential health risks or environmental impacts associated with the site. The study: identifies the type and concentrations of hazardous substances involved; determines potential routes of exposure and the likelihood that humans would be exposed to those hazardous substances; compiles information on the non-cancer, cancer and other adverse health effects of the hazardous substances; and evaluates the levels at which the potential health risk would not be significant. This study is used to establish the health-based remediation targets.

Pump test

A field test by which a well is pumped for a period of time and data is collected for use in assessing characteristics of subsurface water-bearing zones.

Radiation

Energy in the form of a wave, a particle or a discrete packet of energy called a photon, that is released from radioactive sources.

Radionuclides

Elements, including radium, and uranium-235 and -238, which break down and produce radioactive substances due to their unstable atomic structure. Some are synthetic and others are naturally occurring in the environment. Radon, which is the gaseous form of radium, decays to form alpha particle radiation, which can be easily blocked by skin. However, it can be inhaled, which allows alpha particles to affect unprotected tissues directly and thus cause cancer. Uranium, when split during fission in a nuclear reactor, forms more radionuclides which, when ingested, can also cause

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cancer. Radiation also occurs naturally through the breakdown of granite stones.

Radium

A radioactive alpha and gamma-emitting element with a half-life of 1,602 years. In the past, radium was mixed with special paints to make watch faces and instrument dials glow in the dark.

Radon

A gaseous, radioactive alpha-emitting element with a half-life of about 4 days. Radon exists naturally in many locations, and may present a serious health risk when it accumulates in basements or crawl spaces beneath homes.

Reactive

A class of compounds which are normally unstable, readily undergo violent change, and react violently with water.

Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB)

State agency that maintains water quality standards for areas within its jurisdiction and enforces State water quality laws.

Remedial action technologies

Various technologies used to treat, destroy or immobilize potentially hazardous chemicals in the soil, air or water.

Remedial Action Plan (RAP)

A plan, approved by DTSC, that outlines a specific program leading to the remediation of a contaminated site. Once the Draft Remedial Action is prepared, a public meeting is held and comments from the public are solicited for a period of no less than 30 days. After the public comment period has ended and public comments have been responded to in writing, DTSC approves the final remedy for the site (the Final RAP).

Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study (RI/FS)

A series of investigations and studies to identify the types and extent of chemicals of concern in the environment (Remedial Investigation) and provide an evaluation of the alternatives for remediating any identified soil or groundwater problems (Feasibility Study).

Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA)

A 1976 amendment to the first Federal solid waste legislation, the Solid Waste Disposal Act of 1965. In RCRA, Congress established initial directives and guidelines for U.S. EPA to regulate and manage

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hazardous waste. RCRA established a regulatory system to track hazardous substance from the time of generation to disposal. The law requires safe and secure procedures to be used in treating, transporting, storing and disposing of hazardous substances. RCRA was designed to prevent new, uncontrolled hazardous waste sites.

Responsible party

An individual or corporate entity that is considered legally liable for contamination found at a property and, therefore, responsible for cleanup of the contamination.

Risk assessment

A health risk assessment is a document that describes the possible adverse health effects which may result from exposure to contaminants. A health risk assessment does not address the possibility of, or adverse health effects resulting from, a highly unusual or illegal situation such as a fire or major spill. The health risk assessment cannot predict health effects; it only describes the increased possibility of adverse health effects, based on the best scientific information available. The health risk assessment should include a section describing the uncertainties and assumptions that form part of the basis for the calculations.

Rotary kiln

A rotating container for burning materials. The container is usually in the shape of a drum on its side and turns on the long axis. The rotation helps mix the wastes and promotes more complete burning. Rotary kiln incinerators can accept gases, liquids, sludges, tars and solids, either separately or together, in bulk or in containers.

Sanitary landfill

A landfill which does not take hazardous waste, often called a "garbage dump." It must be covered with dirt each day to maintain sanitary conditions. The Integrated Waste Management Board regulates these facilities.

Secondary containment

An area, usually built out of coated concrete, which surrounds the bottom of a tank or container. The containment acts like a bucket to hold any spills from the tank or container. The containment acts like a bucket to hold any spills from the tank or container. This keeps the spilled chemical from getting on the dirt and into the groundwater.

Secondary combustion chamber

The compartment or chamber immediately following the primary combustion chamber. Organic compounds partially burned in the primary chamber are further destroyed in the secondary

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combustion chamber. Ash is collected from below the chamber.

Sediment

The layer of soil, sand and minerals at the bottom of surface waters, such as streams, lakes, and rivers. Sediments of capture or absorb contaminants.

Seismic stability

The likelihood that soils will stay in place during an earthquake.

Selenium

This metal is a nutritionally essential trace element which is toxic at higher doses. High levels of selenium have been shown to cause reproductive failure and birth defects in birds.

Semivolatile organic compounds

Compounds that partially evaporate or change from liquid to gas readily at normal temperatures.

Silver

Silver is a metal used in the manufacture of photographic plates, cutlery, in coins and in jewelry. Silver nitrate is used in an array of industrial chemical processes. It is toxic.

Silvex

A plant killing chemical. Silvex belongs to the group known as chlorinated herbicides.

Sinkhole

A hollow depression in the land surface in which drainage collects; associated with underground caves and passages that facilitate the movement of liquids.

Site mitigation process

The regulatory and technical process by which hazardous waste sites are identified and investigated, and cleanup alternatives are developed, analyzed and decided upon.

Slurry wall

Barriers used to contain the flow of contaminated groundwater or subsurface liquids. Slurry walls are constructed by digging a trench around a contaminated area and filling the trench with an material that tends not to allow water to pass through it. The groundwater or contaminated liquids trapped within the area surrounded by the slurry wall can be extracted and treated.

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Soil borings

Soil samples that are taken by drilling a hole in the ground.

Soil gas sampling

Sampling to detect gases occupying the spaces between soil particles.

Soil gas survey

Soil gas is air existing in void spaces in the soil between the groundwater and the ground surface. A soil-gas survey involves collecting and analyzing soil-gas samples to determine the presence of chemicals.

Soil vapor

Air that fills the empty space within soil. Soil vapor is analyzed to help map the spread of contaminants within soil.

Soil vapor extraction

A process in which chemical vapors are extracted from the soil by applying a vacuum to wells.

Solid waste management units

A unit at which solid wastes have been placed, irrespective of whether the unit was intended for the management of solid or hazardous waste. Such units include any area at a facility at which solid wastes have been released to the environment.

Solidification

Mixing additives, such as fly ash or cement, with soil containing hazardous chemicals, especially metals, to make it more stable. This process lessens the risk of exposure to the hazardous chemicals by making it less likely that those chemicals will move into and through surface or groundwater.

Solvent

A flammable, toxic substance capable of dissolving another substance to form a solution. Solvents are used for paints, varnishes, lacquers, industrial cleaners, printing inks and pharmaceuticals. The use of solvents in coating and cleaners has declined over the last several years, because they are toxic, contribute to air pollution and are fire hazards.

Spray quench

A gas cooling device in which heated gases are showered with water.

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Stabilization

The process of changing an active substance into inert, harmless material; or physical activities at a site that act to limit the further spread of contamination without actual reduction of toxicity.

State action level (SAL)

The maximum concentration of a contaminant in drinking water that DTSC considers to be safe to drink. SALs are usually expressed in parts per billion (ppb) or parts per million (ppm).

State Law A.B. 1803

The California Law requiring special monitoring of public water supply wells for chemicals in addition to those currently regulated under state law (including pesticides and other organic chemicals.)

Static stability

The likelihood that soils at rest will remain at rest.

Stillbottom

Residues left over from the process of recovering spent solvents.

Subsidence

Sinking or settling of soils so that the surface is disrupted, creating a shallow hole or depression.

Suggested No Adverse Response Level (SNARL)

Drinking water standards established by the U.S. EPA, but are not enforceable by law. SNARLs suggest the level of a containment in drinking water at which adverse health effects would not be anticipated (with a margin of safety).

Sulfinol reclaimer bottoms

A waste stream resulting from a process used to remove carbon monoxide from hydrogen gases. The sulfinol is recycled until levels of a compound known as "oxazolidone" become so high that the sulfinol is no longer usable. This happens about once per year, at which time the sulfinol reclaimer bottoms are fed into the CO boilers.

Sump

A pit or tank that catches liquid runoff for drainage or disposal.

Superfund

The common name used for the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act of 1980 (CERCLA).

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Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA)

Modifications to CERCLA enacted on October 17, 1986. See CERCLA.

Surge tanks

A holding structure used to absorb irregularities in flow of liquids, including liquid waste materials.

Tailings

Waste byproducts from mining operations. Tailings are usually found in solid form, and are known to release contaminants into the ground.

Tetrachloroethylene (TCE)

Volatile organic compound that is often used as an industrial decreasing solvent and a dry cleaning agent. TCE affects the central nervous system.

Tetrachlorophenol (TCP)

Tetrachlorophenol is used as a to kill fungus as a wood preservative. It is toxic.

Threshold Limit Value (TLV)

Public health exposure level set by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health and oriented to the safety of the workplace. The exposure level for a contaminant is the level above which a worker should not be exposed for the course of an eight-hour day, due to possible adverse health effects.

Toluene

A volatile organic compound that is often used as an industrial solvent. It is toxic.

Total Threshold Limit Concentration (TTLC)

A public health exposure limit for a contaminant. Exposure to a contaminant at levels in excess of the TTLC is considered to be hazardous to human health.

Toxaphene

A commercial pesticide that was widely used for more than 25 years. A member of the chlorinated hydrocarbon insect-killing chemicals, toxaphene's use has been significantly reduced due to it's toxic effects. Toxaphene is listed as a cancer-causing agent under Proposition 65.

Toxic

Ability to cause harm to human health such as death or cancer (for example: poisons, lead).

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Trial burn

A test of incinerators in which wastes are fed into the incinerator and emissions are monitored for the presence of specific organic compounds, particulates, metals and hydrogen chloride (all specified by agency permits).

Trichloroethane

Trichloroethane (1,1,1-TCA; methylchloroform) is used as a cleaning agent for metals and plastics. It is toxic.

Trichloroethylene (TCE)

A volatile organic compound that is often used an industrial decreasing solvent. It is toxic and is listed as a cancer-causing chemical under Proposition 65.

Unsaturated zone

Underground soil and gravel which could contain groundwater, but which is above the water table or aquifer. This is in contrast to a saturated zone where the space between soil particles is filled with water.

Upgradient

An upward slope; demarks areas that are higher than contaminated areas and, therefore, are not prone to contamination by the movement of polluted groundwater.

Vanadium

A metal and a by-product of petroleum refining. Compounds of vanadium are used in the steel industry, as a catalyst in the chemical industry, in photography and in insect-killing chemicals. It is toxic.

Venturi quench scrubber

An air pollution control device that removes particles from the gas stream by using a pressure drop and particle collision with water droplets.

Video logging

Video logging allows a close-up inspection of the interior of a well. This is done with a color camera that has the capacity to view the well casing and screen at a 90 degree angle to the well's axis.

Vinyl chloride

Vinyl chloride is widely used in the plastics industry in creating polyvinyl chloride (PVC) products. It is listed as a cancer causing agent under Proposition 65.

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Viscosity

The quality or degree of being thick and gluey and not pouring easily.

Void space

The space in a tank between the ceiling of the tank and the liquid level. If the tank is used to store combustible liquids which easily evaporate, this space can fill with vapors which may reach explosive levels.

Volatile organic compounds (VOCs)

VOC's include solvents that readily evaporate at temperatures normally found at ground surface and at shallow depths.

Volatilization rate

The rate at which a chemical changes from a liquid to gas. It is also known as "air flux."

Waste feed

The flow of wastes into an incinerator. Waste feeds can vary from continuous flows to intermittent (batch) flows.

Water table

In a shallow aquifer, a water table is the depth at which free water is first encountered in a monitoring well.

Watershed

The land area from which water drains to a given point.

Wetland

An area that is regularly saturated by surface or groundwater and, under normal circumstances, capable of supporting vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Wetlands are critical to sustaining many species of fish and wildlife. Wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, and bogs. Wetlands may be either coastal or inland. Coastal wetlands are backish (have a certain mixture of salt).

Work plan

The site work plan describes the technical activities to be conducted during the various phases of remediation project.

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Xylene

An aromatic hydrocarbon used in paints, lacquers, pesticides, gums, and resins and adhesives. It is toxic.

Zinc

A metal used for auto parts, roofing, electroplating and dry cell batteries. It is nutritionally essential but toxic at higher levels.